

FLOOD



THE SOUTHERN TIER'S JUNE 1972 DISASTER
A PICTORIAL REVIEW

\$1

To most Southern Tier residents, the rain that began falling late the evening of June 20, 1972, was little more than another early summer storm.

The rain, however, was to fall for three days, bringing the total for the month to nearly 15 inches in some areas. By comparison, only 12.4 inches had fallen in the first five months of the year. The normal June rainfall is three to four inches.

The ground was nearly saturated as the rain, spawned by Hurricane Agnes, began to fall that Tuesday evening. Finally the soil could contain no more moisture and water began to flow off the ground as though it were a water-soaked sponge.

With remarkable speed small hillside streams became raging torrents and shallow rivers rose in their banks.

At 3:15 a.m. Wednesday the first siren sounded in the village of Almond in eastern Allegany County. The flood of 1972 had begun.

PICTURE CREDITS

Many of the photographs in this booklet were supplied through the courtesy of area newspapers. Those photographs are indicated by the following initials:

SRP — Salamanca Republican-Press

OTH — Olean Times-Herald

CL — Corning Leader

ESG — Elmira Star-Gazette and Sunday Telegram

REN — Richard E. Neal, Wellsville

LIL — Liljegvist, Bath

UPI — United Press International



Center and Washington Sts., Salamanca, at height of flood.

(SRP)

SALAMANCA

Though residents of Salamanca knew a flood was coming, few realized just how powerful it would be.

At noon Thursday, June 22, city officials closed off the Main Street bridge in the heart of the city — a precautionary measure with water rising on the bridge foundations.

The rain continued to fall the entire day, and early Friday morning the river began to rise with remarkable speed.

Officials had noted previously that the city's \$3 million dike system, completed only a year before, was 1,380 feet above sea level and should have been equal to the task of holding back floodwaters. By 4 a.m. Friday, however, the river began to rise above the dikes and water poured out onto areas of the city that had never before been flooded.

The river continued rising even after it had flowed over the dikes. Main Street bridge, a foot higher, was flooded by 5:30 a.m., and the city's two remaining bridges were endangered. Parkway bridge was closed to normal traffic at 8:30 a.m. and the Center Street bridge was barred to all but emergency vehicles at 9:10 a.m.

It was the first time in the city's history that all three bridges had been closed at the same time, and the rising waters divided the community into three isolated islands.

The river finally crested at 2 p.m. Friday, holding for two hours at a level of 7.42 feet higher than any previous flood.

Civil Defense director Paul Formica and Police Chief John Kowalski were forced to evacuate their offices and set up emergency headquarters in the Social Services Department on Academy Street. The Sycamore Avenue Fire Department, also inundated, was relocated on upper East State Street.

Low spots in the business district on both sides of the river were flooded. At the West Salamanca intersection of Center, Washington and West State Streets a Little Valley Creek dike broke, flooding that area.

Railroad underpasses on Main and Wildwood

Streets were filled with water, necessitating along north-south detours through the city.

The Front Avenue pumping station of the city's new waste treatment plant near the school bus garage was flooded, but sewage facilities were operable using a gravity system.

In the business district, water flowed into the offices of the Salamanca Republican-Press, forcing suspension of printing Friday, the first time the paper had failed to print in its 106 year history.

Water flowed through other Main Street businesses as well. In the Seneca Theater water marks showed three feet high on the elevated motion picture screen.

At 8:30 Friday night Mayor Kenneth L. Reed and Civil Defense Director Formica decided to impose a 9 p.m. curfew.

For 300 to 350 residents, the curfew sent them not to their homes but to evacuation centers in city schools and to the Jimerson Town Relocation Area of the Seneca Nation of Indians. The Senecas, who own 90 per cent of the land on which Salamanca is situated, had created a refuge for the white residents.

Saturday morning was a time for appraising the losses in the city. Mayor Reed, in surveying the damage, remarked that the devastation was ten times worse than from any previous flood.

There was an estimated \$100,000 damage to the city dikes. The Sycamore Avenue Moose Lodge, remodeled only a month before, received \$60,000 to \$65,000 in damages to the structure and an additional \$5,000 inventory damage. Other concerns listed similar losses.

Tuesday morning 40 portable pumps were placed on the dikes near City Hall to pump floodwaters back into the river. Local officials called it one of the greatest mutual aid cleanup efforts in the history of Western New York.

In a way, however, Salamanca was fortunate. Only one injury was reported. Father Charles Zadora received a fractured right thumb when, while climbing from a police car to view the rising waters, the door was slammed on his hand.



Salamanca's business district.

(SRP)



Lifeline carried evacuees over Race St., Salamanca.



A Clinton St. home in Salamanca was typical of residential districts in flood ravaged Southern Tier. (SRP)

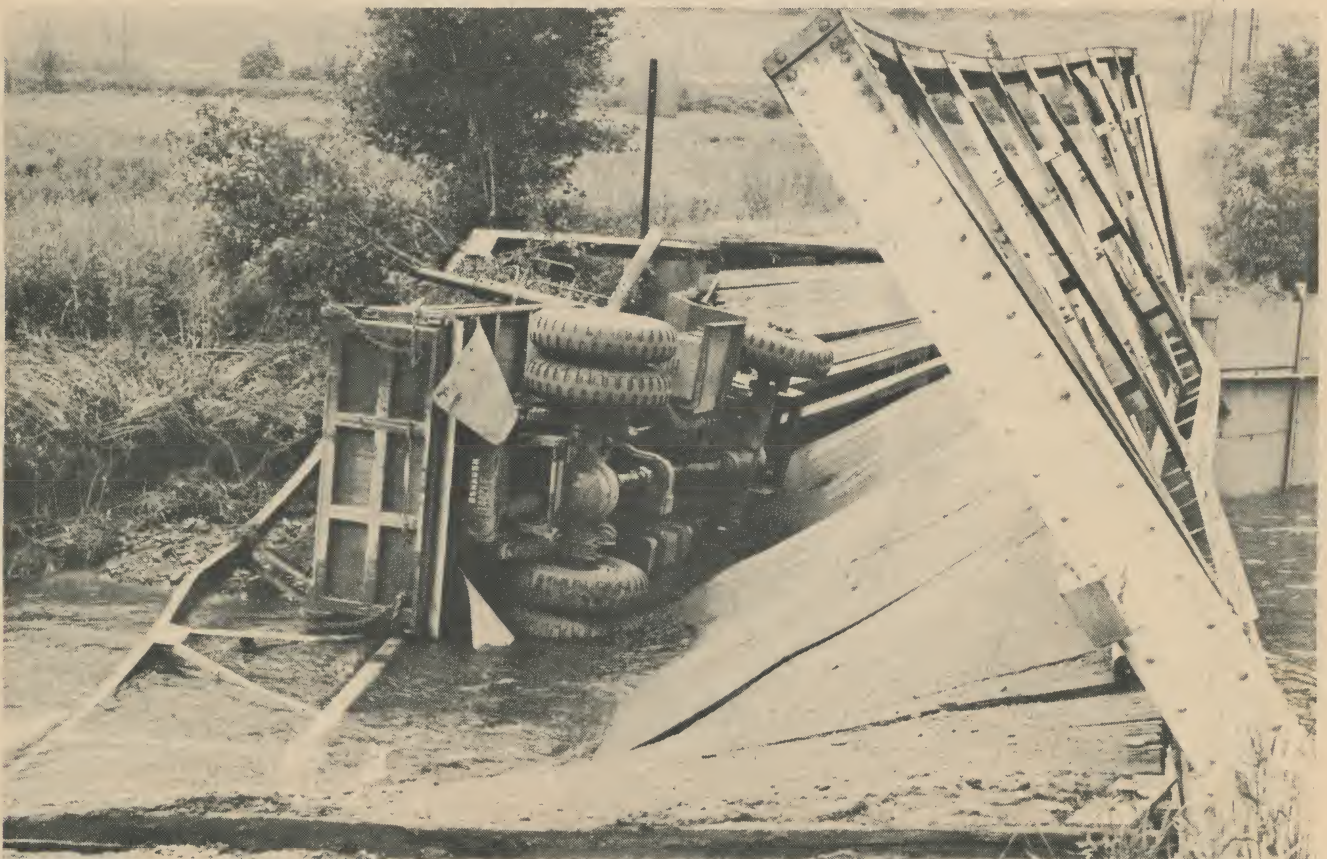


Flooding in area of Erie-Lackawanna bridge over Little Valley Creek in West Salamanca.

(SRP)



Debris lodged in a Salamanca concrete plant.



Undermined bridges added to Southern Tier's damage. This one is in the Town of Little Valley.

(SRP)



Why railroads stalled — Erie-Lackawanna's W. State St. crossing in West Salamanca. (SRP)



Salamanca's Main St. after the Allegheny River receded. (SRP)



Flood waters inundate Randolph's Main St. shopping area in western Cattaraugus County.

(SRP)

OLEAN

It took a 20-year old dike system, a bank of computers and a good deal of luck to avoid tragedy in Olean during the flood of 1972.

Civil Defense director Marita Cornell received the first warning that Olean might experience a major flood 8:45 a.m. Wednesday June 21, when a warning was flashed on an all-points radio frequency monitored in the Civil Defense headquarters.

By Thursday morning the Pittsburgh office of the National Weather Service had amended this warning to read "The Olean area should prepare for the greatest flood of record."

It had been raining almost constantly in Olean. Between Tuesday evening and Friday morning nine inches fell on the city. Already the deluge was swelling the Allegheny River, Olean Creek, Kings Brook and Johnson Creek to their maximum.

Flood stages were reached late Wednesday. That evening city department officials and sewage plant directors, fearing the worst, began feeding information into a Pittsburgh computer to determine if evacuation would be necessary.

Mayor William O. Smith revealed the results of the computer readout at a meeting of city officials and the press at 10 a.m. Thursday a projected river level of 24 feet by Friday, equal to the top of many of the city's dikes. Already water was spilling through and over dikes in the Portville area and flooding homes there.

Mayor Smith ordered Department of Public Works director Robert Carr and City Engineer William Bauer to draw up maps of the areas of the city that would be endangered. He also sent out a request for National Guardsmen from Buffalo.

Late Thursday 150 Guardsmen arrived. Officials were already starting to talk of evacuation, and the Guardsmen joined other volunteers on a house-to-house tour of the low-

lying areas, notifying residents that they might be evacuated.

The decision to evacuate was made at 4:30 Friday morning. At 7 a.m. Mayor Smith announced that about one third of the city — 6,000 people in endangered areas — should evacuate by 2 p.m.

The evacuation was an orderly one. About 750 people sought refuge in the Olean High School. Others went to the homes of relatives.

Fire Chief Fred Page dispatched 20 men to several homes already surrounded by water to evacuate residents by boat.

The computers continued to provide gloomy forecasts. One computer projection from Cincinnati estimated the water level would be 24.6 feet by 2-4 p.m. Friday, a height which would have overflowed many sections of the dike.

The flood crest came at 1:30 p.m. Friday and held for five hours at 24.2 feet — so close to the top that one resident stated "If you had mowed the grass on the dikes they would have overflowed."

They did overflow in several spots, but the damage was far from what had been anticipated. Civil Defense estimates showed 75-100 homes heavily damaged or destroyed, many of them near Portville.

There was no high pressure flooding.

The greatest problem in Olean, for many, was the inconvenience. Many businesses were interrupted, including the Olean Times-Herald which was unable to print papers two days while \$250,000 worth of its equipment was evacuated to high ground. The suspension was the first in the paper's 112 year history.

There was no loss of life in Olean, however, and when the greatest flood in the city's history receded the city could be thankful that the grim forecast of the computers had been wrong.



As in many communities there was water taxi service on Olean's S. Union St.

(OTH)



Olean's Bradner stadium and War Veterans Park were flooded on E. State St (SRP)



The flooding Allegheny River poured over Olean's south side. (OTH)



Sandbagging efforts in most Southern Tier areas were futile. This was at Olean's War Veterans Park. (OTH)



Water nearing the top of Front St. retaining wall in Olean.

(OTH)



The Allegheny overflows its south bank opposite Olean's partially built sewage treatment plant. (OTH)



A shopping center inundated at Weston's Mills, east of Olean on Route 17. (OTH)



Route 17 in badly flooded South Portville.

(OTH)



Volunteers in Allegheny take to an outboard to pick up flood-stranded residents.

(OTH)



An Allegheny valley farm east of Olean was typical of many gutted throughout the Southern Tier.

(OTH)



Residential cleanup was repeated over and over throughout the Southern Tier. This was in Portville.



More salvaging in Portville, east of Olean.



Eldred over the line in Pennsylvania.

(OTH)



State highways, such as Route 21 at Alfred Station, add damage in the millions.



A storehouse washed off its foundation and smashed at Allegany

ALLEGANY COUNTY

There was not one flood, but two in Allegany County.

Residents of the area awoke to the first flood Wednesday morning, June 21. By 8:30 a.m. swollen streams had poured over their banks and inundated most of the southeastern section of the county.

At 8 a.m. that first day two feet of water was already flowing through the Main Street of Andover. The two streams that run into the community had isolated it.

Electric power gave out in Wellsville, the largest community in the county, Wednesday morning, throwing Radio WLSV off the air. The Worthington and Air Preheater plants were unable to open, and by mid-morning several sections of Wellsville had already begun to evacuate as the waters advanced.

Evacuation began in the early morning hours in Fillmore as high waters forced nearly 400 of the village's 537 people to seek high ground.

By midday the Genesee River flowed over its banks from Stannards to Scio. Whitesville was surrounded by floodwaters and all electric power was shut off.

Though the Genesee floodwaters crested at 23 feet Wednesday at Wellsville the rains continued and water levels dropped only slightly, continuing the emergency in the county.

At 4:20 a.m. Thursday Joseph E. Griffin, 21, of Orchard Park, drove around a barricade in Scio, believing the bridge beyond it to be intact. The bridge was gone, and Griffin became one of the flood's first fatalities.

By Thursday afternoon Army Reserve Troops had arrived from Canandaigua to lend assistance to beleaguered Wellsville. They were able to help in curfew patrol and evacuation assistance, but it was not humanly possible to prevent the rising waters from wreaking further havoc in the community.

At 4 a.m. Friday the Genesee crested for the second time at Wellsville, a foot higher than the level on Wednesday.

The repeated river swell was too much for the undermined and evacuated west wing of Jones Memorial Hospital. At 6:50 a.m. Friday it toppled into the river, resulting in the single largest structural loss in the county.

Water and Light Department records in Wellsville Friday morning showed 3.7 inches of rain had fallen since early Thursday, bringing the total in the community to 13 inches since the rains began.

The effect of the staggering volume of water was devastating in the county. As the waters finally drew back Friday, County Civil Defense Director Robert L. Coulter estimated the county loss at between \$40 and \$50 million.

Even as the water receded the damage continued. At 9 p.m. Saturday the Pearl Street Bridge in Wellsville, which had been hanging by a thread several days, finally collapsed into the Genesee.

Coulter later estimated 29 bridges had fallen or were severely damaged throughout the county.

The flood had forced the evacuation of 2,000 county residents, 500 of them in Wellsville alone.

Wellsville Mayor Robert G. Gardner estimated local damage as high as \$20 million and said there was at least \$1.5 million in damages to village-owned facilities. Wellsville Superintendent of Schools Stanford Masin estimated a quarter million in damages to the community's school system.

Bolivar was also hard-hit. Water rushed through the village Main Street and badly damaged the garage, showrooms and new car lot of one of the community's car dealers.

There was damage in the county seat in Belmont as well. Among the business losses reported was the loss \$6,000 in worms from a hybrid worm farm. Mrs. Robert Shuttleworth, wife of the farm owner, reported a small number of worms had survived in a garage, however, and this business, like many of the others in the county, would survive.



The rampaging Genesee hit the Wellsville golf course and took out approaches to foot bridge.



With public water supplies washed out many communities such as Olean got water from tank trucks. (OTH)



Like these Allegany volunteers, many areas sent food to flood victims.

(OTH)



Everywhere in the Southern Tier flood victims got shelter in schools as in this picture from Olean. (OTH)



Liberty St. in the Allegany County village of Bolivar.

(OTH)



A raging torrent over Bolivar's Main St.

(OTH)



Wellsville's controversial Broad St. bridge about to go.

(REN)



The Ward Annex area on Wellsville's east side.

(REN)



An auto dealer's display lot submerged in Wellsville.

(REN)



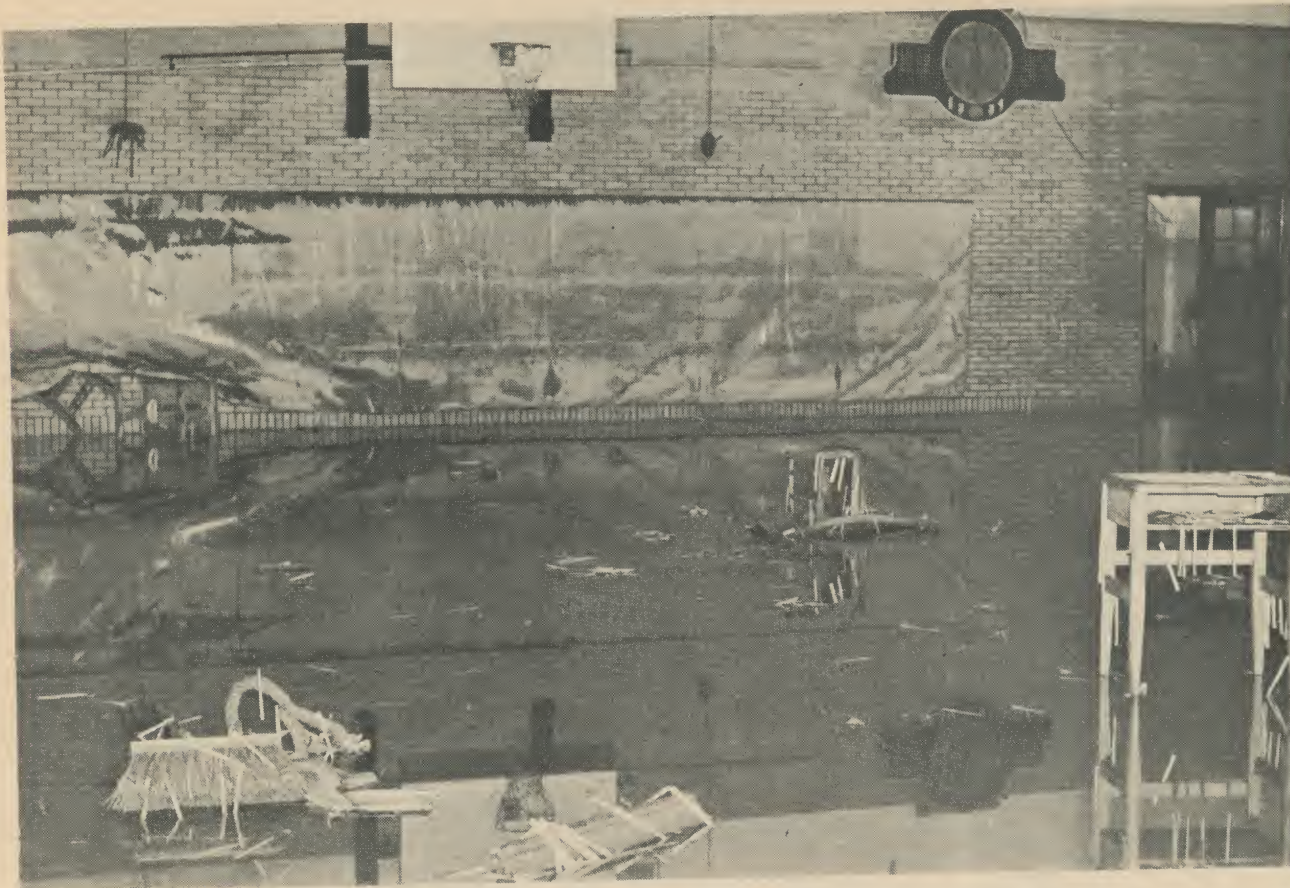
A relief utility truck bogged down in the former Sinclair Refining area of Wellsville. (REN)



Dyke Creek changed its course and took Wellsville's Miller St. bridge with it. (REN)



Gravel and water dislodged this Miller St. residence in Wellsville.



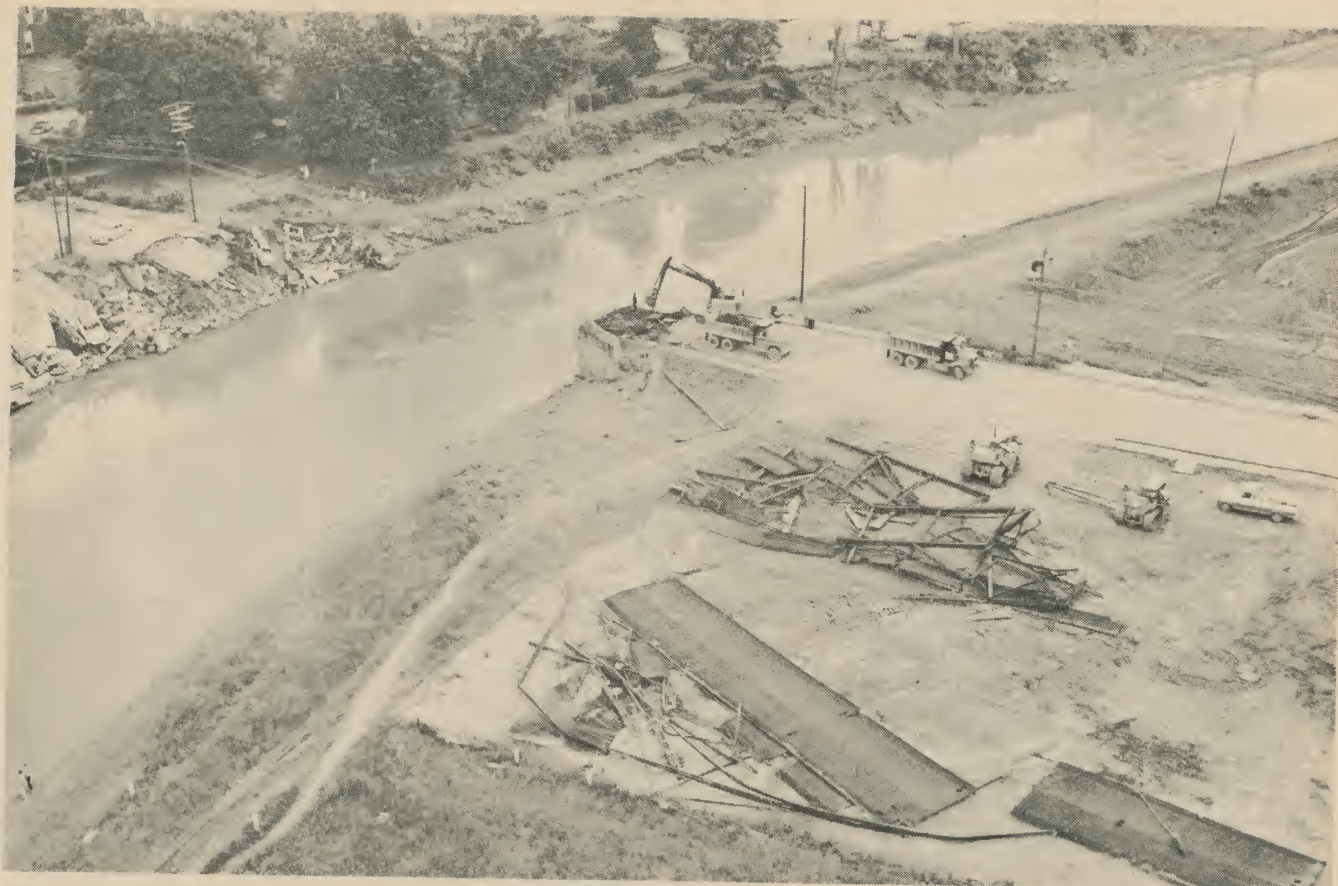
Water covered floor of the girls' gym at Wellsville High.

(REN)



South Main St. in Wellsville.

(REN)



Wreckage of the washed-out Pearl St. bridge is removed from the Genesee River at Wellsville. (REN)



An amphibious duck from the Erie County Sheriff's department on a relief tour at Wellsville.



Fields were washed and buildings undermined at this farm on the Wellsville-Scio highway. (REN)



Desks and chairs submerged in Wellsville's Brooklyn elementary school.

(REN)



Muddied records and books were left in the maintenance office of Wellsville High. (REN)



Toppled electric lines block a washed out Route 17 at Andover.



This undermined house at Alfred station was typical of many stream-side structures.



One of many dramatic rescues was this one of Mrs. John Ide of Almond. Her husband and a daughter were among the missing, being swept away by Canacadea Creek.



Dairy cattle, too, were endangered by the area's torrential streams. These were saved.



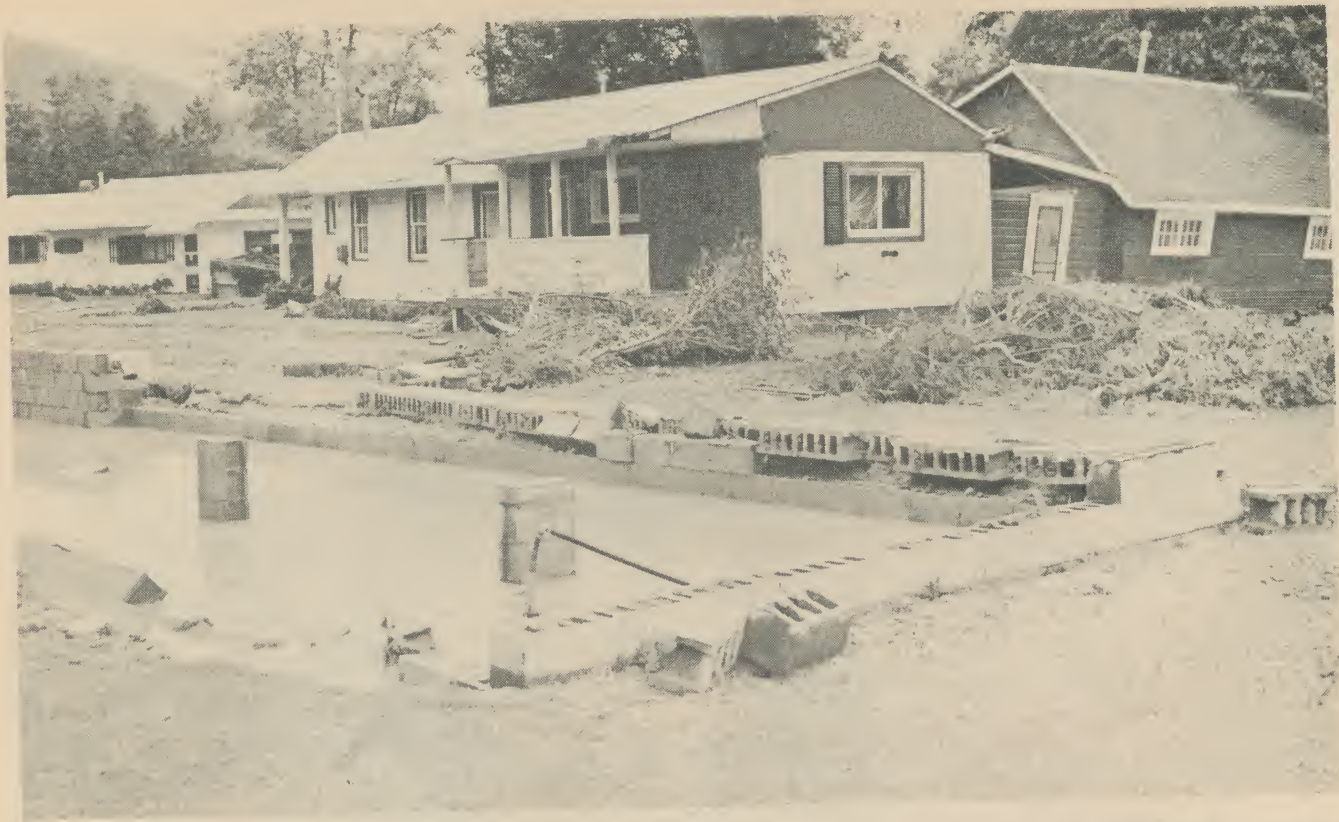
One of hundreds of damaged barns in the Southern Tier was this one in Allegany County.



A wild-running Dyke Creek changed its course through Andover and collapsed a bridge in its old course. (REN)



Scores of utility crews were brought in to repair ruptured gas lines or lay temporary ones.



House at the right was washed off foundation in foreground in the Prior Road area of Elm Valley. (REN)



Old autos were used vainly to protect approaches of the Stannards highway bridge near Wellsville.

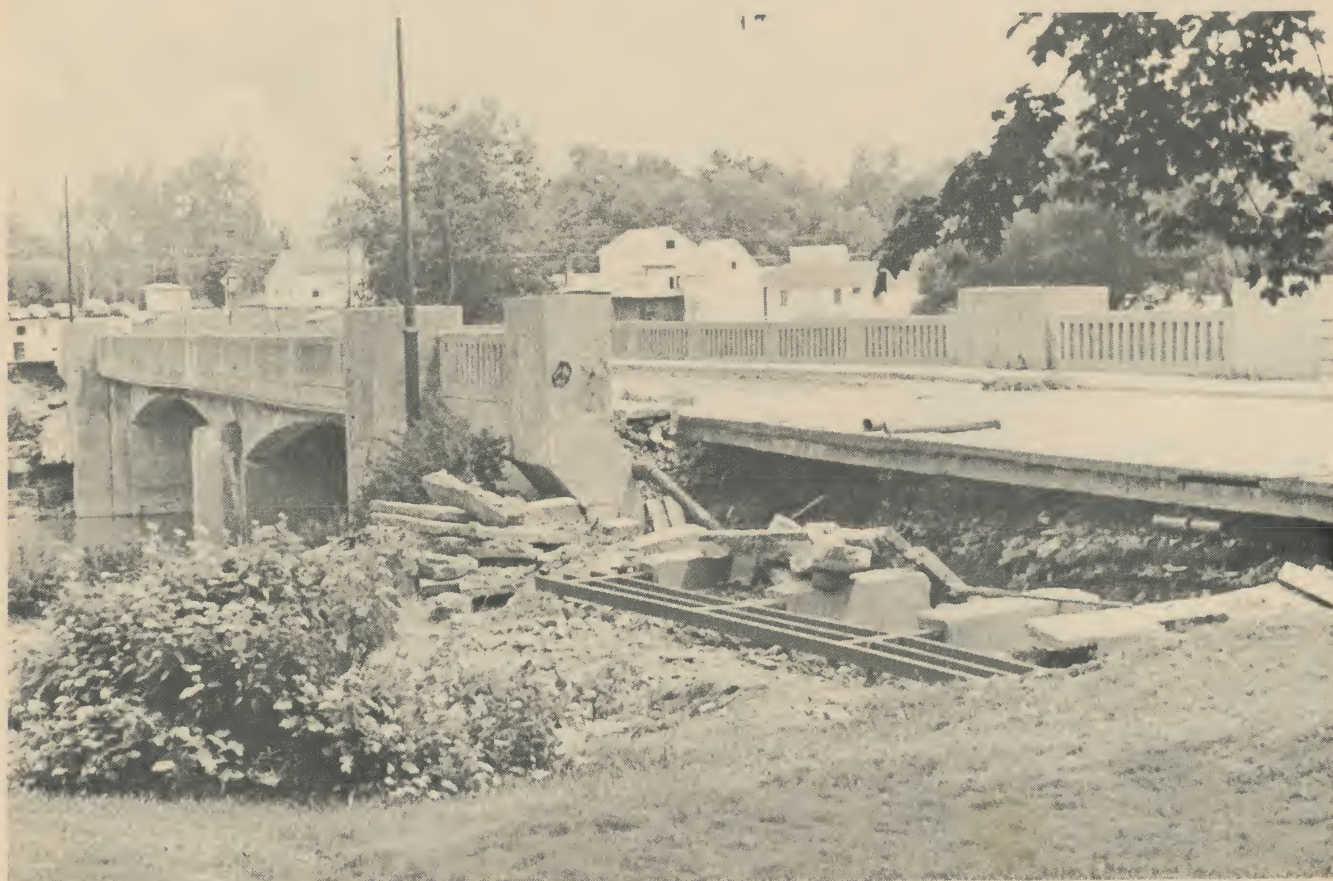


The Wellsville command post was typical of many set up in the Southern Tier .

(REN)



A motorist lost his life when he drove into this hole while the Scio bridge was covered.



Undermined approach to the Route 19 bridge at Belfast.



This stream moved to the left and took out the Hallsport-Stannards state highway. (REN)



The Red Cross was quickly on the job throughout the area. This headquarters was in Wellsville.

(REN)



Relief workers take requests for help from this Red Cross center at Wellsville.

(REN)

HORNELL AND VICINITY

The first victims of the 1972 flood were from the Hornell area.

As waters in the Canacadea Creek near Almond rose early Wednesday morning, John Ide attempted to escape the flood with his family. The Ides launched a small boat from the rear of their Main Street home, but the craft quickly capsized in the current.

Mrs. Ide and the couple's 16-year-old daughter Rene grasped tree branches for several hours before being rescued by firemen. Her husband and their six-year-old daughter were never found.

The residents of western Steuben County were caught off guard by the flood. Inhabitants of the dike area in Canisteo first learned of the situation at 7 a.m. Wednesday when they were awakened and notified that they were being evacuated to the local high school and Presbyterian Church hall.

As floodwaters reached their first peak at 8:30 Wednesday morning Hornell Mayor Andrew Mazzella and Steuben County Sheriff Jack Lisi set up their emergency headquarters in the Hornell City Building. They were to remain there several days, getting little sleep as the reports of devastation came in.

In North Hornell the Big Creek dike crumbled for the second time in four months, flooding the area. Water-borne trees crashed into houses on the south side of the stream and overturned cars in dealer lots to the north.

By mid-morning Wednesday it was reported that water was building up between the lanes of the Southern Tier Expressway under construction near Almond. The entire village was evacuated and most of its residents spent nearly a week in the Alfred-Almond Central School expecting word that the highway lanes had crumbled and the village washed away.

Though that event never occurred, many returned to find their homes destroyed the flood.

Thursday morning Steuben County registered its first flood fatality as Farley Stampp of Savona was swept away in the waters of the Conhocton River as he tried to escape from a car on the flooding Knight Settlement Bridge on Route 15 near Bath.

Few areas in the western half of the county escaped damage. Canisteo was cut off from Hornell when the Main Street of that village became covered with four feet of water, Purdy Creek Road was washed out and the Hart Street Bridge in Hornell crumbled, preventing access to the old Hornell-Canisteo Road.

Arkport was also cut off because of the Big Creek overflow. In the village of Arkport itself, the Lime Kiln Creek broke through dikes in several spots, threatened the East Ave. bridge and flooded cellars in the Meadowbrook area.

Instead of abating, the floods increased Thursday evening and hundreds of homes in all areas of the City of Hornell were evacuated. Refugees fled to the Hornell senior high school, the Wildwood BOCES campus and the homes of relatives.

Though waters receded by the weekend, the flood had not yet claimed its last victims. Three men died when the helicopter in which they had been inspecting area damage collided with high tension wires and plunged into Crosby Creek at the Hornell city limits.

Perhaps the most numbing blow in the Hornell area was felt by the Erie-Lackawanna Railway. Already in financial difficulty, one railroad official described the flood as the "straw that broke the camel's back." On Monday, June 26, the railroad, which had for years been Hornell's largest employers, filed bankruptcy proceedings in U.S. District Court.



Rescue volunteers on North Hornell's Cleveland Avenue.



This bit of Southern Tier Expressway construction west of Almond acted as a dam when sluices collapsed and forced evacuation of the entire village. The fill did not collapse. (REN)



Route 70A gutted by Big Creek east of Hornell.



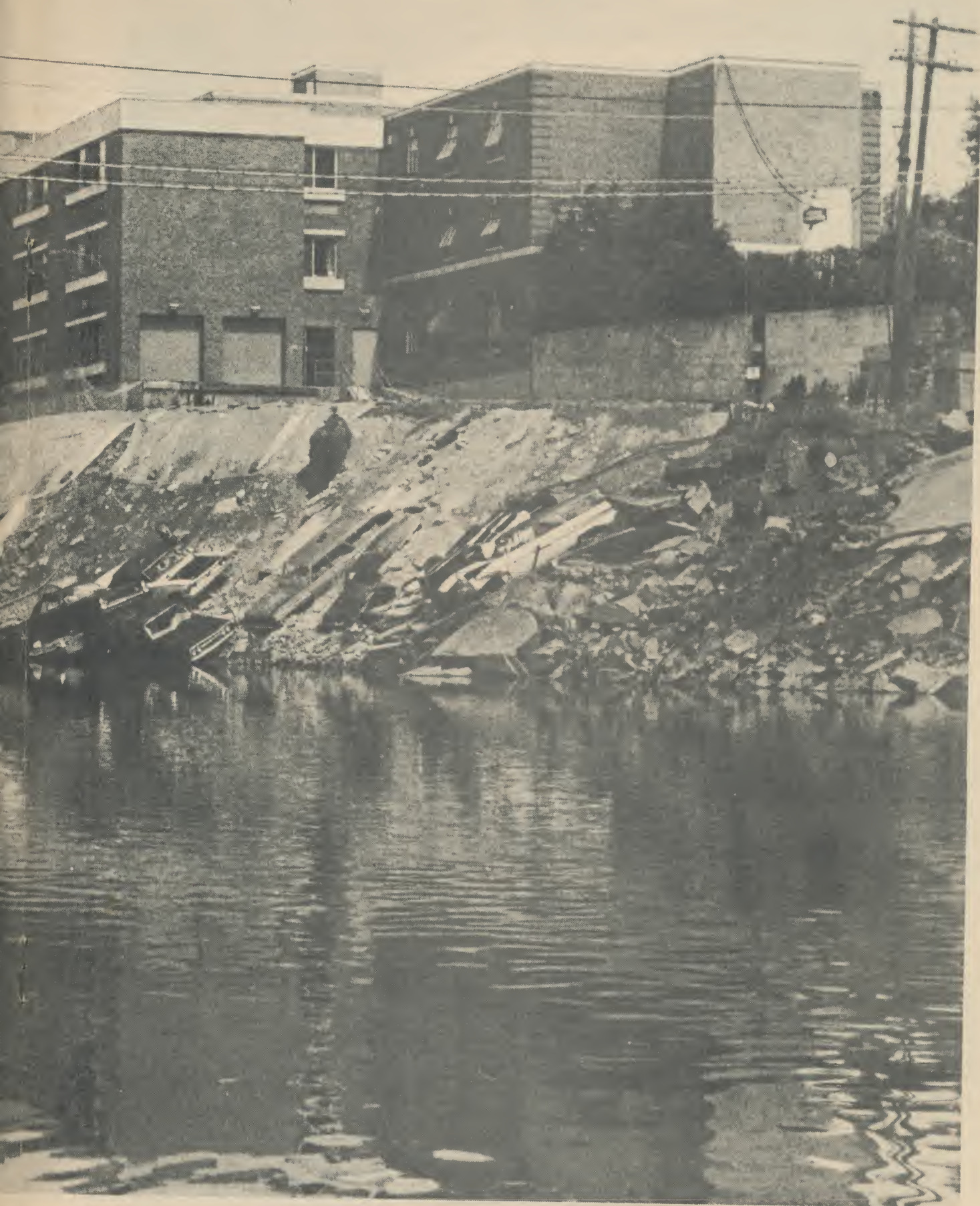
Volunteers on a sandbagging mission on Canisteo's West Main St.



An Almond home hit by flooding Canacadea Creek.



Probably the most spectacular damage in the Southern Tier was the collapse of a four-story wing of J. Edgar Hoover Hospital. The building had been evacuated from the hospital and there were no casualties. Old autos used in attempt to restrain the un-



of Jones Memorial Hospital in Wellsville and the new parish hall of Trinity Lutheran Church. Patients had
the undermining action of the Genesee River remain on the river bank.



More like a river than a street was Canisteo's West Main St.



This house was moved from its foundation at Almond.



Washed out bridge approach on Big Creek road near Hornell



Attempts to shore up a creek embankment at North Hornell resulted in a ruptured gas main.



A North Hornell home moved off its foundation by wild-running Big Creek.



Crosby Creek twisted the Honey Run Road bridge out of shape west of Hornell.



Three members of an Army Engineers survey party were killed when their helicopter crashed into power lines over Crosby Creek at Hornell.



The Canisteo River wall kept the river out but trapped runoff from Tobes Hill along Hornell's Dennis Ave.



The Canisteo River took out half the Canisteo Castle bridge.



Chunks of the Stephens Gulch road were completely washed out between Canisteo and Howard.



A Dansville mobile home park was washed with gravel and badly damaged.



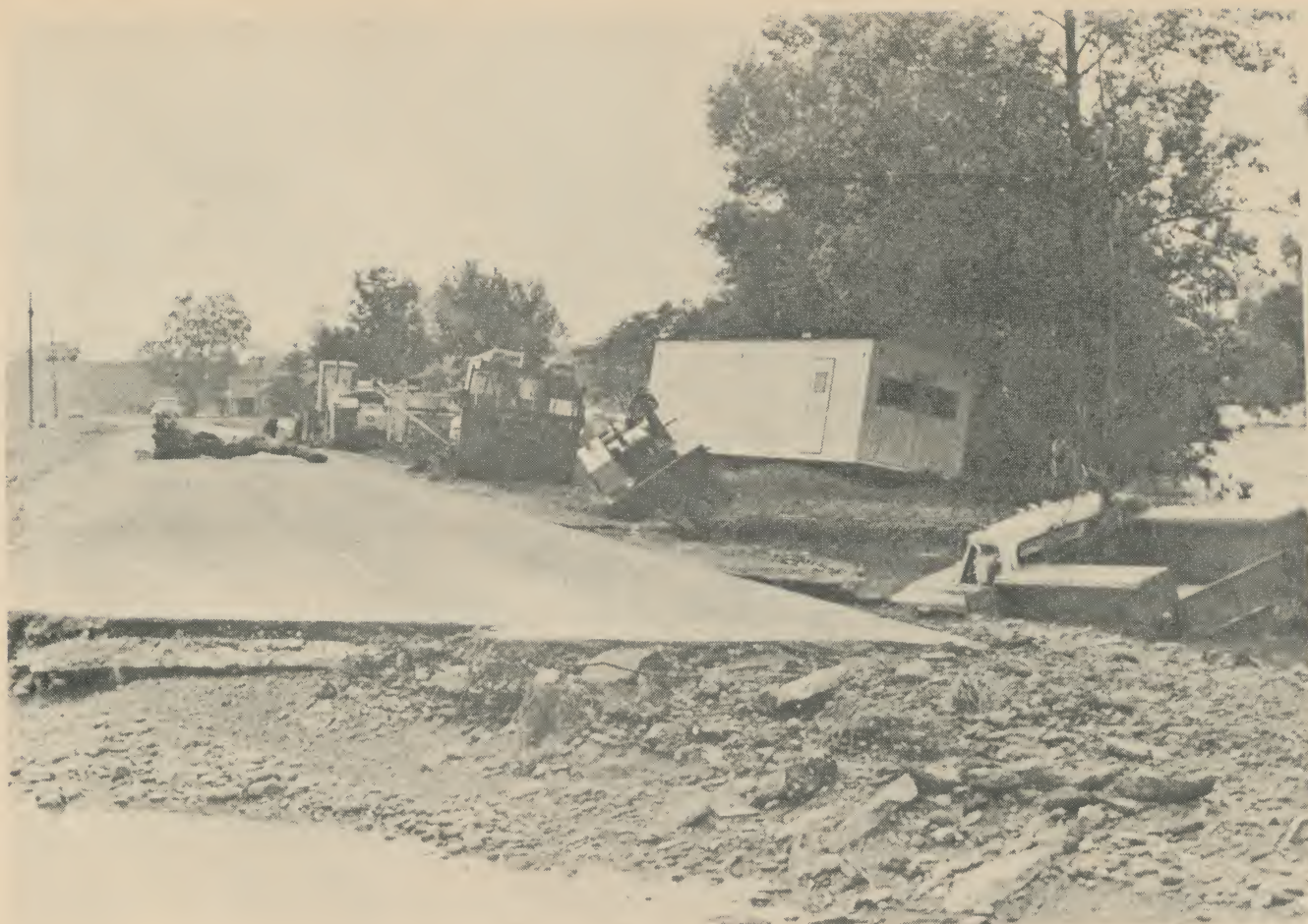
A Dansville mobile home was ripped from its frame — left twisted by the force of the flood.



Canaseraga Creek ripped into the Foster-Wheeler plant north of Dansville.



Mud and debris surround the Foster-Wheeler office building after Canaseraga Creek subsided.



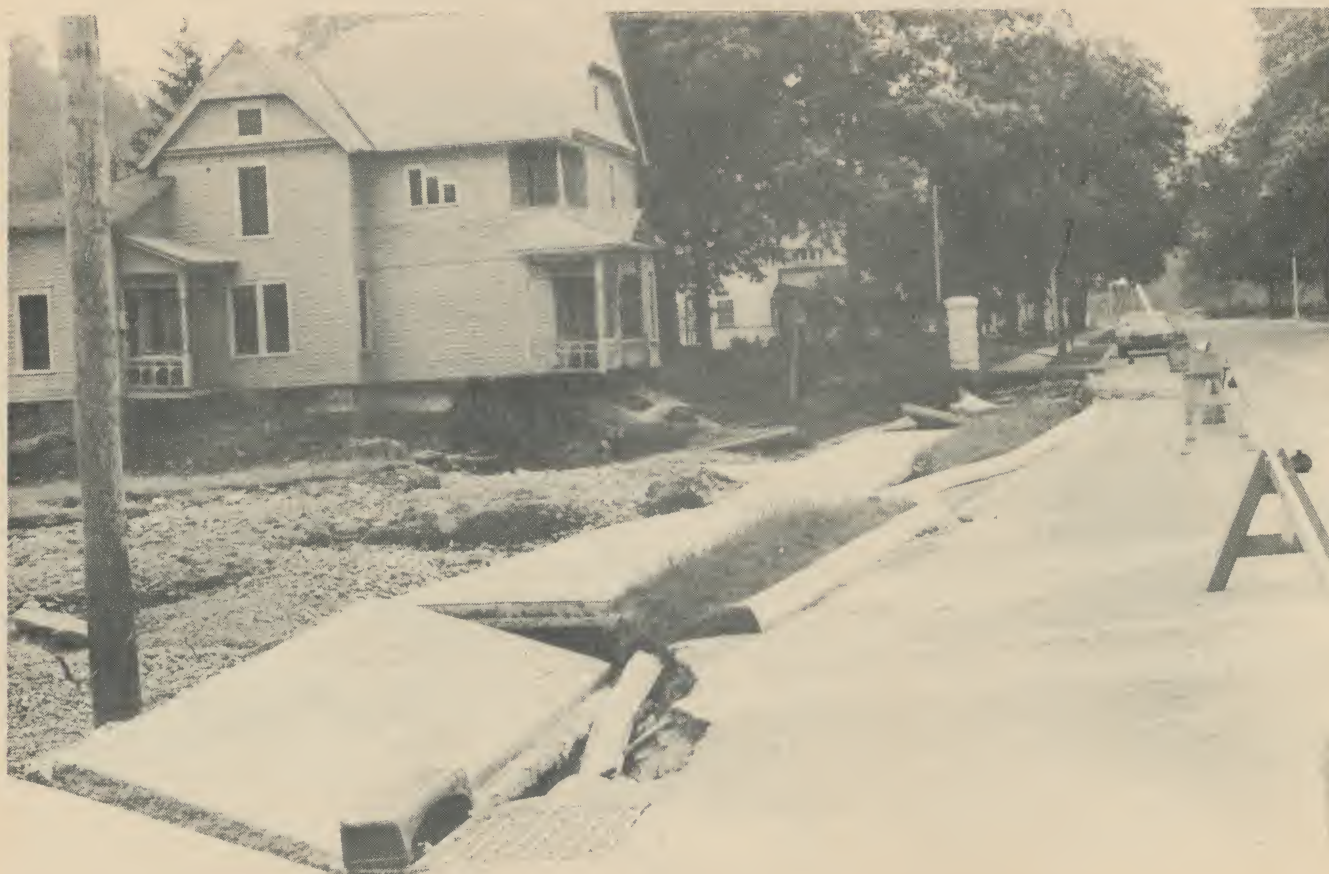
Construction machinery along Route 15 between Kanona and Avoca was tossed around by the Conhocton.



A yard filled with debris along the Southern Tier Expressway west of Avoca



This garage was tumbled and the house almost fell victim to Naples Creek near the Naples fairgrounds.



An auto is washed under the porch of a Belfast St. home in Bath.



One of thousands of Southern Tier residents mopping up after the flood was this Kanona householder.



Mobile home developments like this one in eastern Steuben were vulnerable to the flood.



The Conhocton River ran wild over the approach to the Bath Veterans Administration facility. (LIL)



It was hood-high in parts of Bath. (LIL)



This Bath resident was typical of many thousands dejectedly facing post flood mop-up.



Due to circumstance beyond their control tours at the Taylor Wine Co. were suspended temporarily.



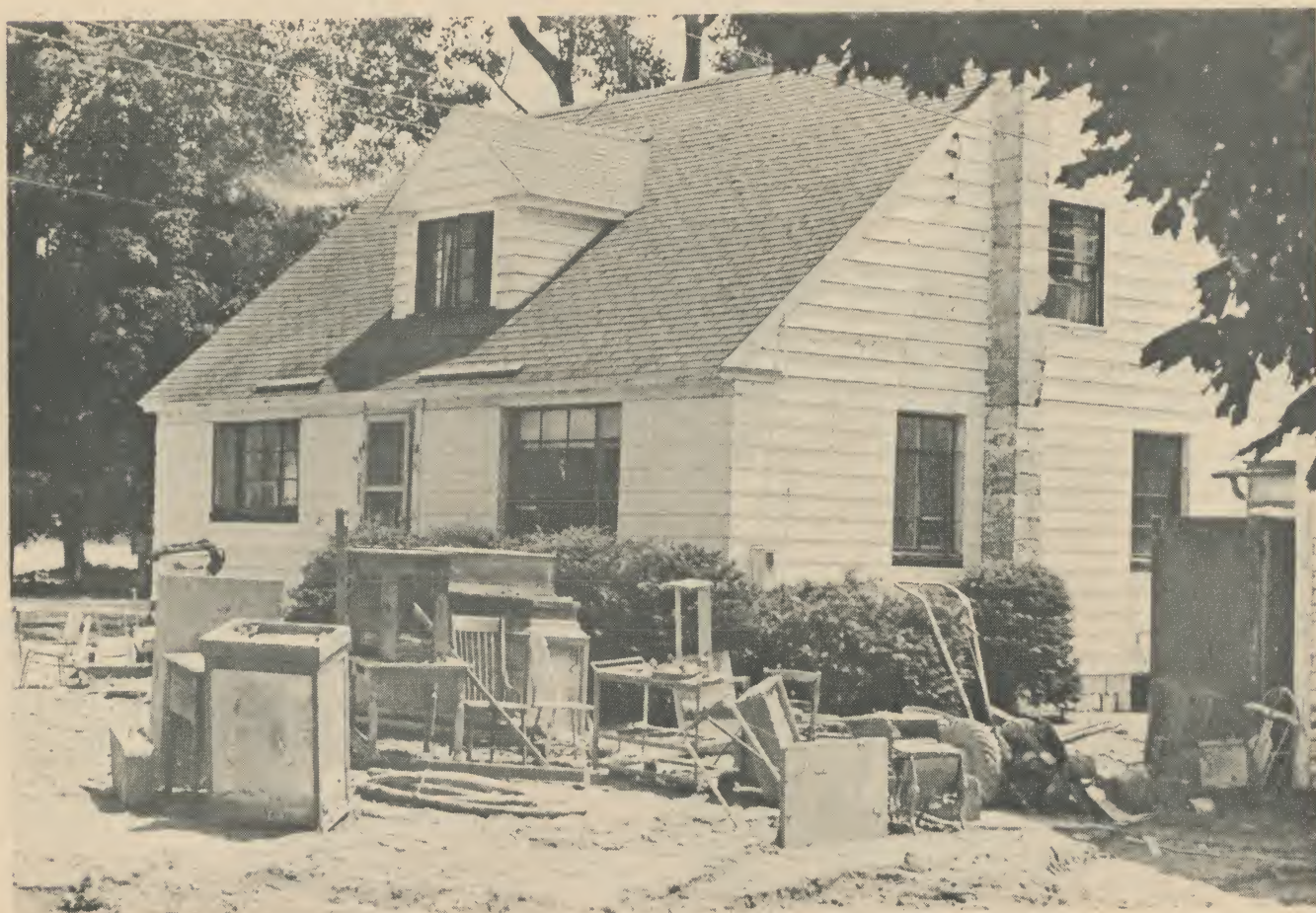
More mobile home water problems in the Babcock Hollow area near Bath.



The flooding Conhocton tossed this mobile home on its side near Kanona.



A flood-related casualty was this gas station at Portageville on the Genesee.



Furniture salvage at a flooded Portageville home.



Penn Yan in Yates County got its share of flooding.



Boats looked right at home in the Penn Yan Boat Co. storage yard.



Washed out Slaughter House Road near Penn Yan.



Uprooted trees were frequent sights in the flood area. These were in a Penn Yan yard.



Parts of the Penn Central bridge were washed downstream by the Chemung River at Corning. (LIL)

THE CORNING AREA

The evacuation came at the last moment for other residents as well. Many were rescued from second story windows of their homes. At the Lodge on the Green 135 guests were evacuated by boat. One man died in his room.

Ingersoll Rand and Corning Glass, the area's two major industries, were hard-hit by the flood.

Rand officials anticipated a two to three month lapse in production as \$10 million in vital repairs were carried out. Numerous valuable items in the Corning Glass Museum were shattered by the force of the water.

The Corning Leader, the newspaper which served the community, was swamped by the flood. The journal was forced to merge with the Elmira newspaper for several issues, one of them a mimeographed edition, before making temporary use of the Hornell Tribune facilities.

An estimated half million gallons of gasoline from storage tanks on Route 352 flushed into the hamlet of Big Flats. The area was evacuated for nearly a week while cleanup operations were carried on, and those nearing the area were ordered to keep out all flames.

Most dramatic was the damage to residential areas in Corning. Mobile homes sailed down the floodwaters like cardboard boxes, shattering against bridge abutments. Roofs of houses were carried off, buildings collapsed and entire homes were wrenched of their foundations and wrapped about trees.

In the days that followed the disaster the National Guard joined city police in patrolling the city and its environs.

Residents trickled back to their homes slowly, to begin the arduous task of salvaging what they could and discarding the rest. For many, there was little left to save.

For residents of the Corning area, the rising waters were, at first, a novelty.

Hundreds of people journeyed to the Chemung River dikes Thursday evening, June 22, to view the rising water and read the river gauges. Few, if any, saw cause for alarm.

There had been some flooding on the afternoon of June 22 in Corning. Several rural roads in the outlying areas were covered with water and Park Avenue was closed by the South Corning Foodmart.

The only active concern, for the most part, was shown by city officials. As heavy downpours continued police began to take hourly readings on the river's gauges.

Mayor Joseph J. Nasser received permission shortly after 11:30 p.m. Thursday to call in National Guard units if it became necessary. His request for the forces at the time seemed merely precautionary, however.

Around midnight the river appeared to have stabilized under 22 feet, a good distance below the flood stage of 23-25 feet.

It was 4 a.m. on June 23 when Hell and high water first came to the City of Corning.

At that point the river began to rise sharply and within the hour it was pouring over the river dikes. Shortly afterward sirens began to wail, rousing residents from their sleep.

By 5:30 a.m. a railroad bridge had collapsed and water was pouring through the dikes, down Market Street and into the business district of the city. Store windows shattered and the flood poured inside.

A major evacuation was ordered, but for at least 18 persons it was too late. Their bodies would be found later in the rubble of a battered city.



A washed out dike and yards on yards of gravel and debris left on River St. in Corning's north side.

(CL)

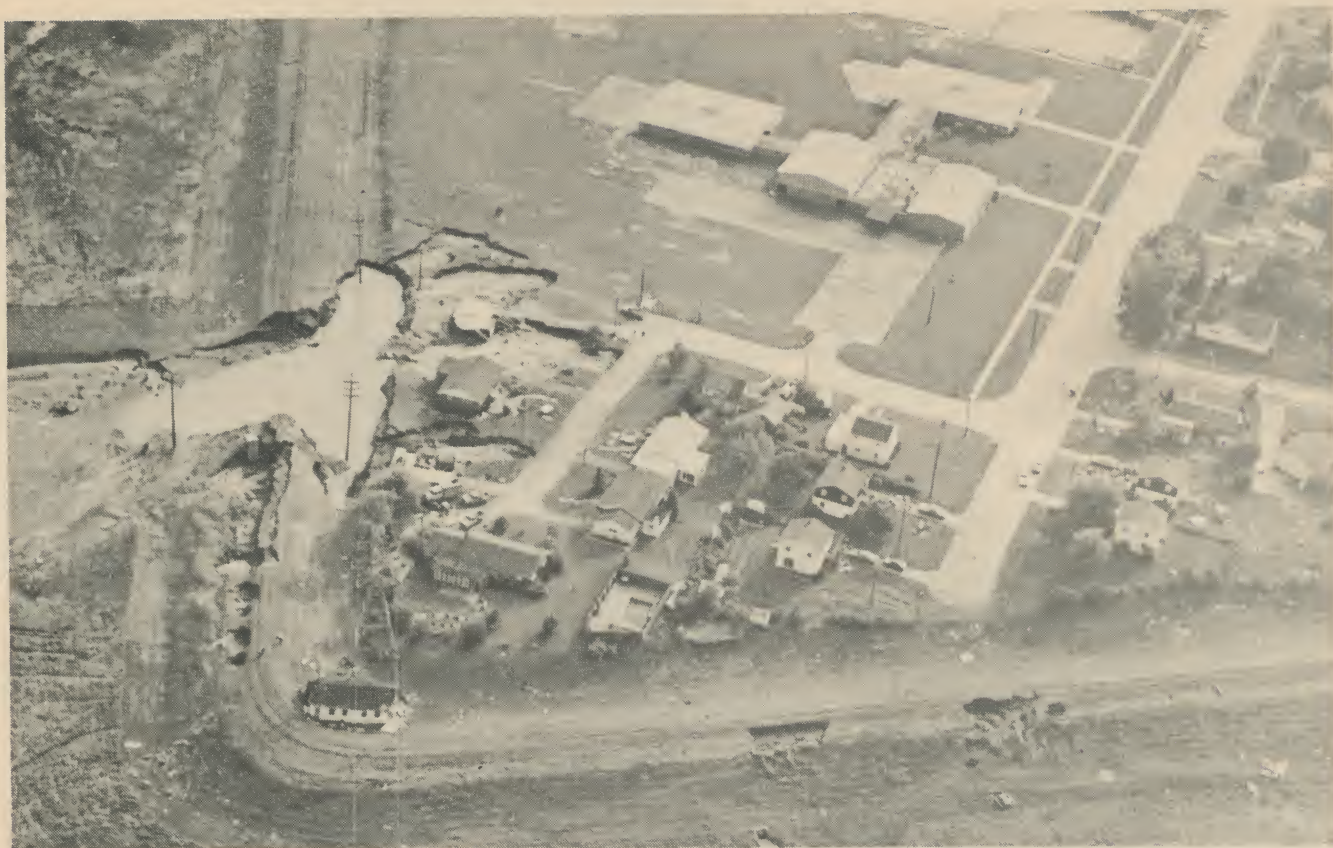


This man swam for his life and made it against swirling flood waters in the Baker St. area of Corning. (CL)



Buckled floors and mud smeared machinery in the Ingersoll-Rand Painted Post plant.

(CL)



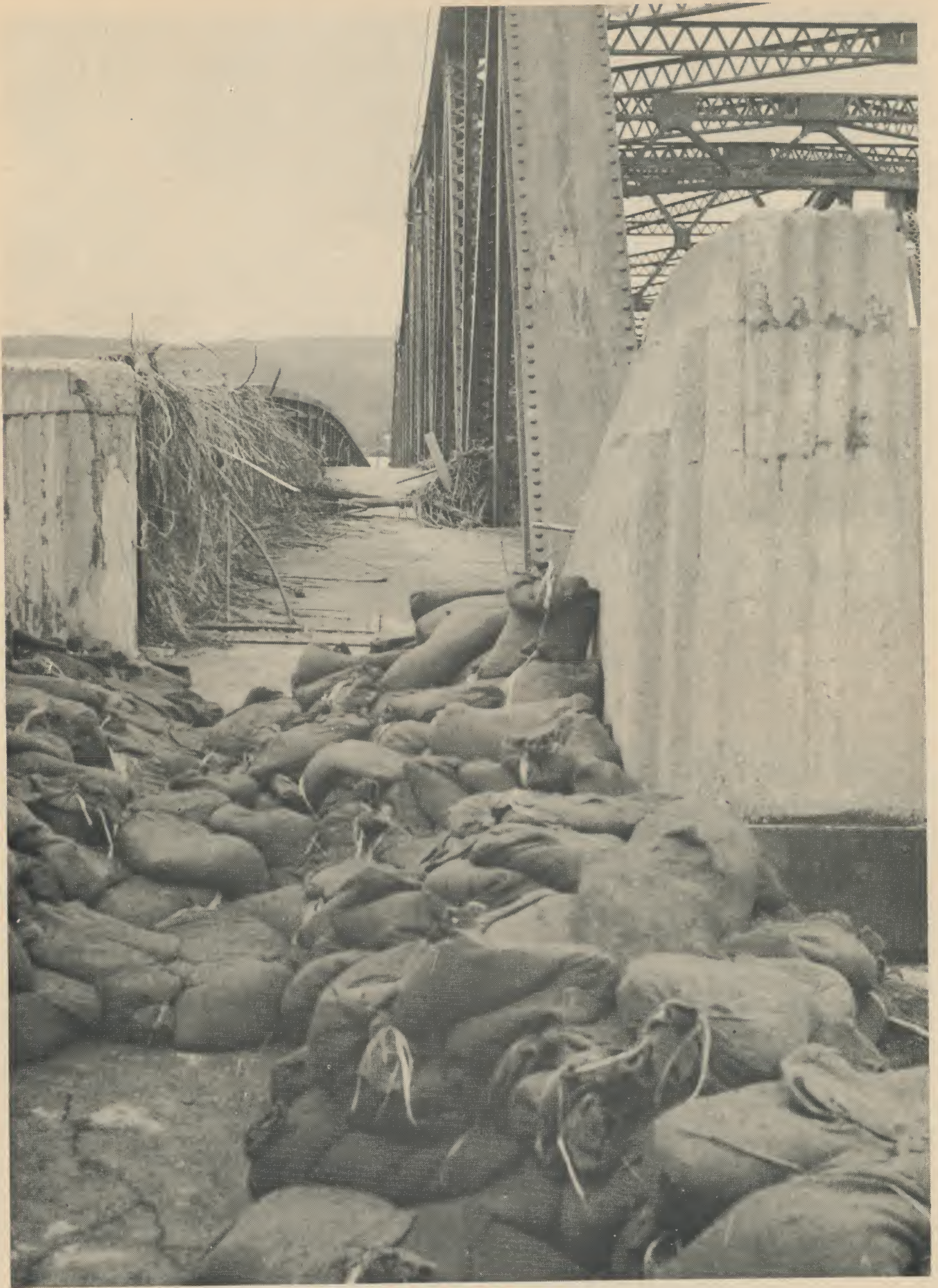
Contributing to the devastation in Corning's north side was this break in the dike near Post Creek.

(CL)



This Gang Mills house was found along Route 15 — a mile from where it originally was situated.

(CL)



Sandbags were of no help as the Chemung overflowed the railing of the Bridge St. span in Corning.

(CL)



One of several federal agencies setting up temporary quarters to aid flood victims — this one in Corning. (CL)



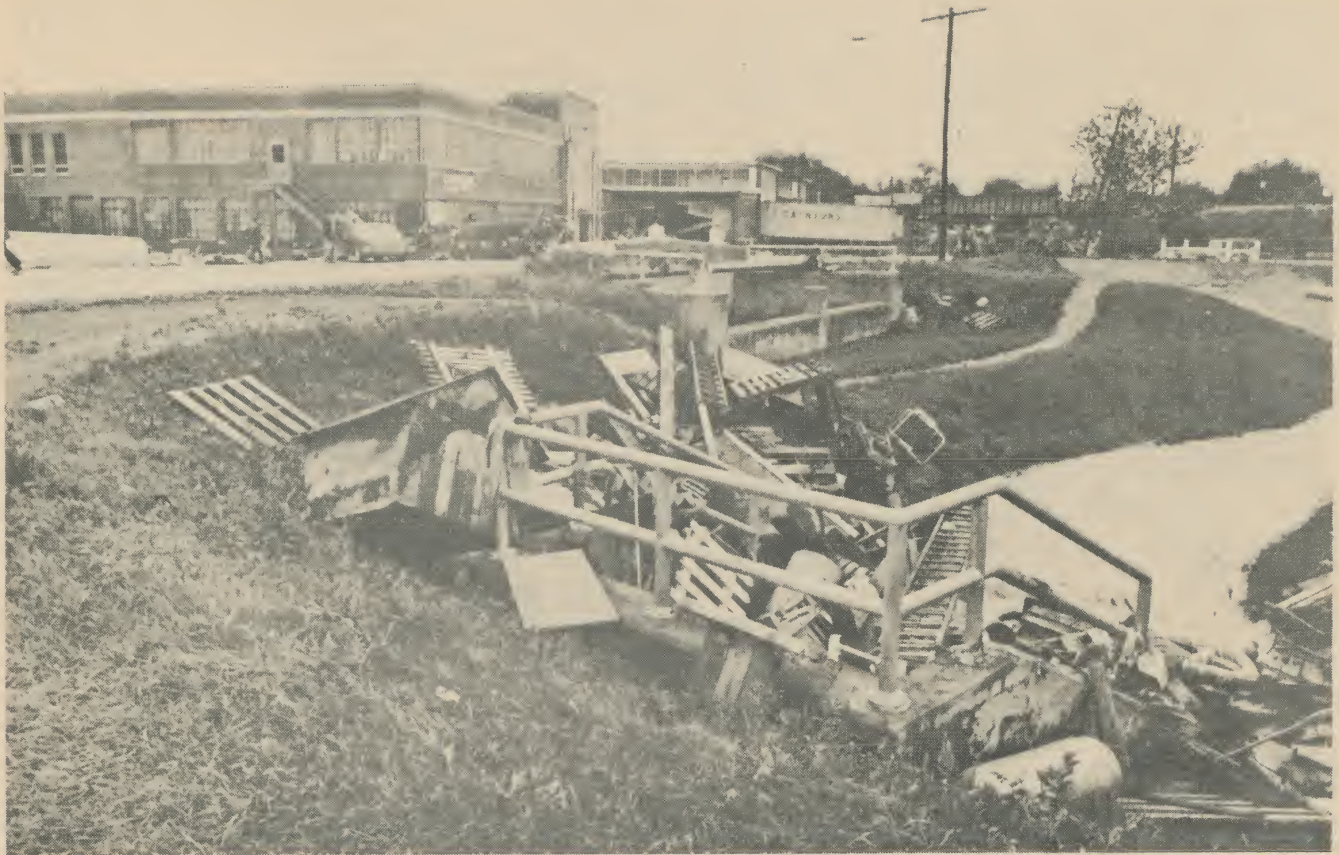
Food was made available to thousands throughout the Southern Tier. This was at Corning's Winfield School.(CL)



A damaged home in the Riverside area of Corning.



More residential damage in the Corning area.



Debris clogs a sluice in the dike at Riverside.

(LIL)



Auto dealers in the Corning Area were hit hard as were others in most parts of the Southern Tier.

(LIL)



High water line shows in the windows of the Corning Glass Center and a desk washed onto fenders of autos.
(LIL)



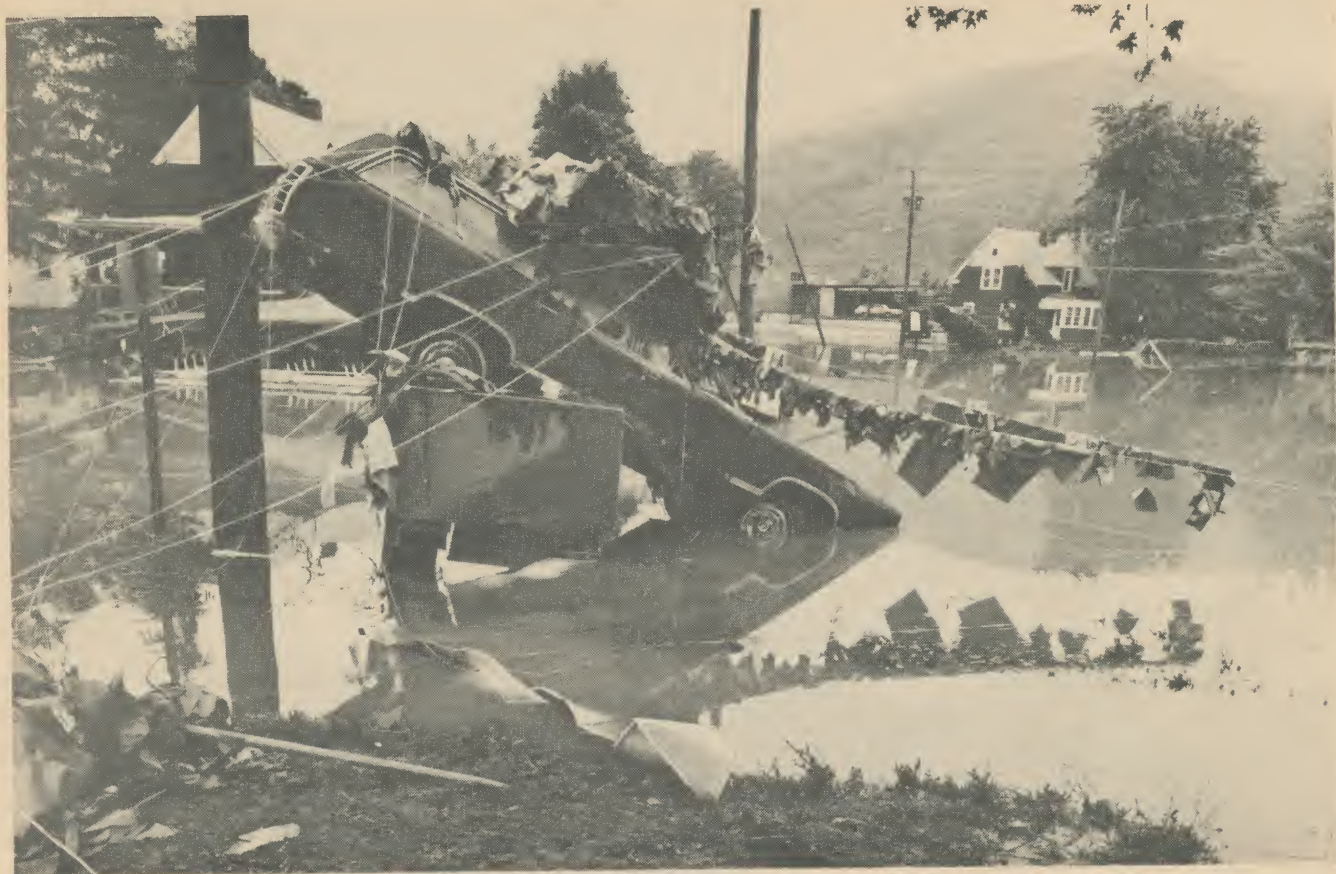
Flood-damaged furniture and packaging at the Corning Glass Center.



Another scene of residential wreckage in Riverside.



Tossed-around autos were grim testimony to the force of the flooding Chemung at Corning. (LIL)



A station wagon tossed against a utility pole in the Corning area.

(LIL)



This restaurant was washed out at Corning. Highwater mark shows on building to the left of McDonald's.

(LIL)



Where some of the diking gave way along the Conhocton just north of the Painted Post circle. (CL)



Another auto tossed around in the June flooding.

(LIL)



A view of the hard-hit north side area of Corning.

(CL)



Flooded Walnut St. in Corning facing the main Corning Glass Works plant.

(CL)

THE LEADER - STAR-GAZETTE

Special Edition

Corning, N.Y.

Noon

June 24, 1972

Corning City Mayor Joseph J. Nasser this morning issued the following statement:

1. The water has receded and is now contained within normal river channels in almost all areas within the city.
2. There is no mass evacuation of the city of Corning.
3. Corning Hospital patients are being removed to Montour Falls Hospital, where there are electrical power and sanitary facilities.
4. People who are now in evacuation centers such as CFA, Beaver Valley, West High School, Corning Community College and other locations should remain at these centers. There is adequate food, medical personnel available and will continue to be available.
5. Food supplies for the general public in the Corning area are being brought in through the National Guard, Civil Defense and other agencies. Food distribution centers are being established and locations will be announced as they are established.
6. The national guard troops are in the area at the request of the government of the city of Corning. They are here for protective purposes only: to protect property and people. They are under the direction of city officials. A 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew has been established.
7. We must insist -- that sightseers keep out of the business sections and out of the flooded areas. They only impede efforts to get needed facilities in operation.
8. I want to applaud all agencies and individuals for their help in this most serious emergency.
9. For those who has suffered losses in homes, furnishings and belongings, steps are being taken to establish centers where information can be secured. Trained people are being flown in to give advice and help on state and federal programs of assistance. Center locations will be announced as soon as they can become operable.

Officials of all agencies -- the city, Red Cross and others -- have agreed that the only statements that are to be considered official are those issued by this office.

Further coordinating efforts are being made on a continuous basis.

Signed by Joseph J. Nasser
Mayor, City of Corning

THE LEADER - STAR-GAZETTE

Special Edition

Corning, N.Y.

-2-

June 24, 1972

Officials at evacuation centers at Winfield St. School on the Northside and at West High School report no major problems. There is food, water and shelter available.

The downtown area of Painted Post and Ingersoll-Rand were hard hit. Riverside and the Corning Packaging Co. plant were hard hit.

There are eight known dead, four within the city, one in Riverside and three in Painted Post. National Guard units from throughout the state are in the area and are assigned to assist in the search for the missing.

Confirmed dead are: Evelyn E. Cash, 13 Corning Blvd. and Eva Walter, 15 Corning Blvd. Authorities said the other city dead live at 22 Pershing St. and 19 Jennings St.

The dead person in Riverside reportedly lived on E. Water St. No identification has been made on the Painted Post and Riverside dead.

Officials in Painted Post, Riverside and surrounding areas urge all private vehicles to remain off the streets as they are hampering rescue work.

* * * * *

UTILITIES

Electric restoration will be made as rapidly as possible. Substations are still under water. Six areas are without power.

Gas: will be restored as soon as possible.

Outside crews are here to help both the electric and gas firms in their work.

Water: two tankers of pure drinking water on the way. In regard to water for washing, sanitary purposes, officials urge residents to use storm water where possible. Do not use drinking water for this purpose.

* * * * *

Governor Rockefeller was scheduled to arrive here this afternoon and to confer with officials.

South Corning officials said the business district is nearly a complete loss. Many residential areas were hard hit. All city assistance possible was offered to the village before the flood hit and this policy is being continued.

THE LEADER - STAR-GAZETTE

Special Edition

Corning, N.Y.

-3-

June 24, 1972

An advanced group of National Guard officials from Binghamton, Cortland, Auburn, Oneida, Oswego, Geneva and Rome arrived in Corning at 4 a.m. today and met with top local officials. Contingents from the units involved are being divided between Elmira and the Corning area.

Engineers from Guard units from throughout the state are on the way here. They are under local command and will assist wherever needed.

William Shay, a top national Red Cross official, arrived here today from Cleveland, Ohio to coordinate efforts.

Red Cross will operate on a two-phase system. First will be providing emergency clothing, food and shelter. The second phase will start when evacuees start returning to their homes.

* * * * *

Compiled by the Leader staff.

*R. Vi. Peen
1/28/72 10/11/92 Editor*



An Elmira street after the waters began to recede.

(ESG)

ELMIRA

Much of the eastern seaboard of the United States suffered flood damages during the 1972 floods.

The high waters were spawned by Hurricane Agnes as it wandered up the coast, refusing to act like other tropical storms and break apart or veer out to sea.

In New York State Agnes coupled with a cold front. The result was the widest spread flooding in the history of the state, and the center of the storm was, for a time, above the city of Elmira.

Officials in Elmira knew in advance of the flood that Agnes was causing trouble elsewhere in the state. By late Wednesday several evacuations had been made as near to the city as West Elmira.

Frequent checks on the Chemung River Wednesday showed little cause for concern. The river level held at a mere nine feet, 12 feet below the flood stage and 14 feet below the rim of the dikes that protect the city.

There was, it appeared, little cause for concern. But Elmira officials had failed to anticipate the rapidity with which the river could rise.

Torrential rains fell most of the day Thursday and the Chemung climbed to within two feet of the top of the dikes. By 10 p.m. evacuations had been begun in several sections of the city, and by 3:30 the next morning nearly half the city's residents were being told to flee their homes.

The water spilled over the dikes shortly after dawn, carrying with it the remains of one of the city's four bridges and tons of debris.

First to be hit by the main force of the floodwaters was the Elmira business district, where stores on Main and Water Streets took the brunt of the torrent.

The flood continued on to create havoc in the residential areas, sweeping through homes and

destroying neighborhood business concerns.

One section of the Southern Tier Expressway was swept away in the city.

When the flood had ceased its rampage Mayor Richard Loll estimated that 7,500 of the city's population of 40,000 were homeless.

In many ways the flood was just the start of Elmira's problems. Almost as soon as the waters began to pull back looters swarmed in.

The looting problem became so intense that City Manager Joseph Sartori issued orders sealing off the city. Elmira Police Chief Thomas Donells said half a dozen looters were arrested in the first days following the disaster and National Guardsmen patrolled the city streets searching for others.

There were other difficulties as well. Elmira found itself dependant on the outside world for food and other supplies.

Not only was there no drinking water, there was a shortage of containers to put it in.

Relief, however, came from everywhere. Inmates at the Elmira Correctional Facility baked 3,000 loaves of bread for distribution, prepared meats and provided blankets and mattresses for the city.

By Tuesday, June 27, limited flow of traffic was possible on only two of the city's four bridges. One of the remaining bridges was destroyed.

Vice-President Spiro Agnew toured the city Thursday, June 29. After viewing the devastation he remarked "Conditions here are worse than anything I have seen anywhere."

Agnew left Elmira with a pledge that the city would receive all possible federal aid for its attempt to rebuild. As he did, residents were already returning to their homes, beginning the long road back to recovery from the flood of 1972.



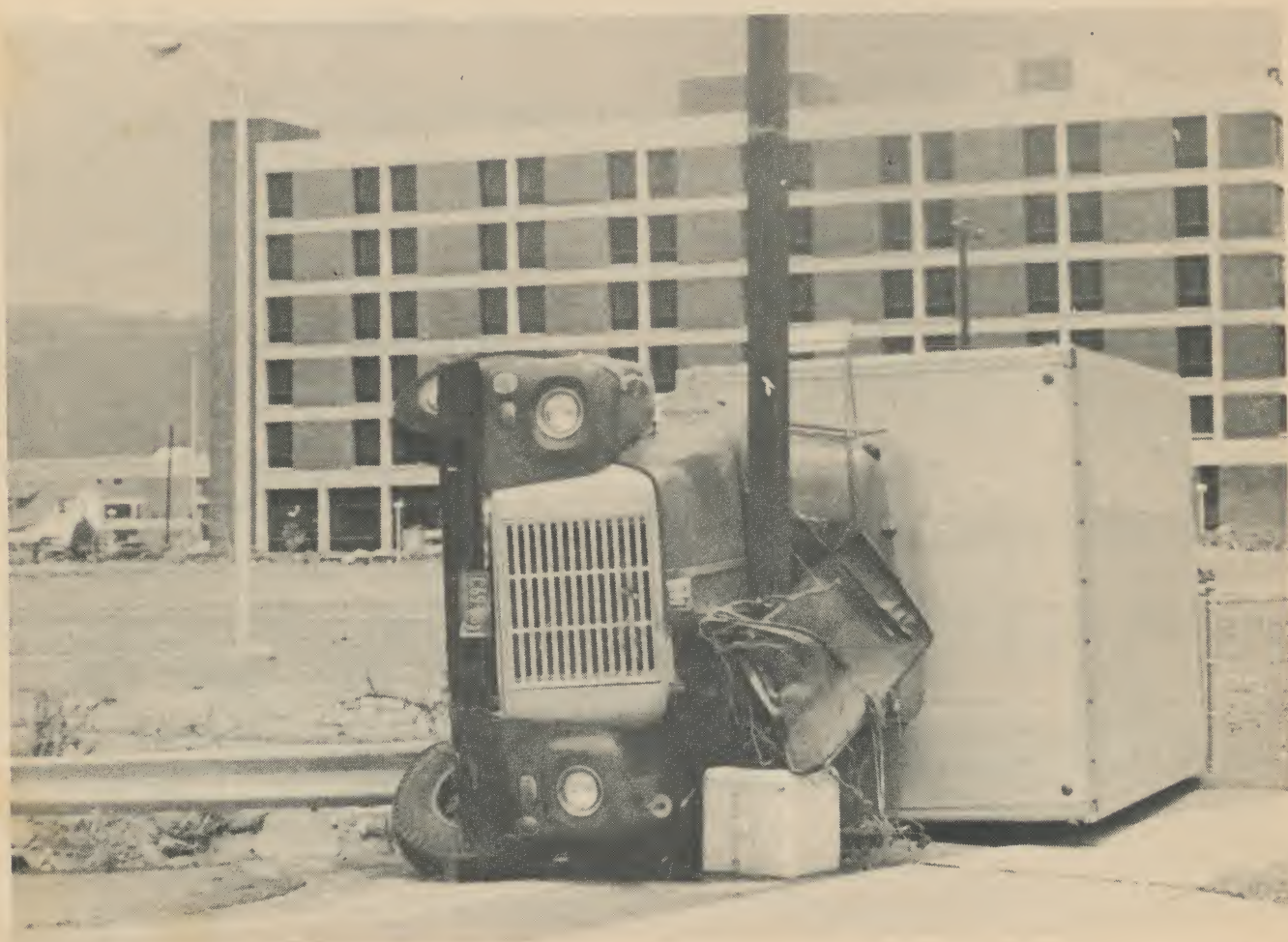
Elmira's Water St. was parking-meter deep with the surging overflow of the Chemung River. (ESG)



This two-story house was rolled like a toy and left upside down on the outskirts of Elmira. (ESG)



More evidence of the violence of Elmira's flood were these sections of Water St. sidewalk. (ESG)



Even large truck vans were like toys to the flood in Elmira. (ESG)



Campers and garages were thrown end over end in Elmira's residential districts.

(ESG)



More damaged Elmira homes.

(ESG)



Debris on Elmira's Water St. after cleanup got underway in that city.



Mud-covered streets and sidewalks like these on Elmira's South Main St. were left everywhere. (ESG)



Hundreds of Elmira homes were left with inches of mud and ruined furniture. (ESG)



Merchandise inside Elmira stores became a soggy mass of debris in the 1972 flood. (ESG)

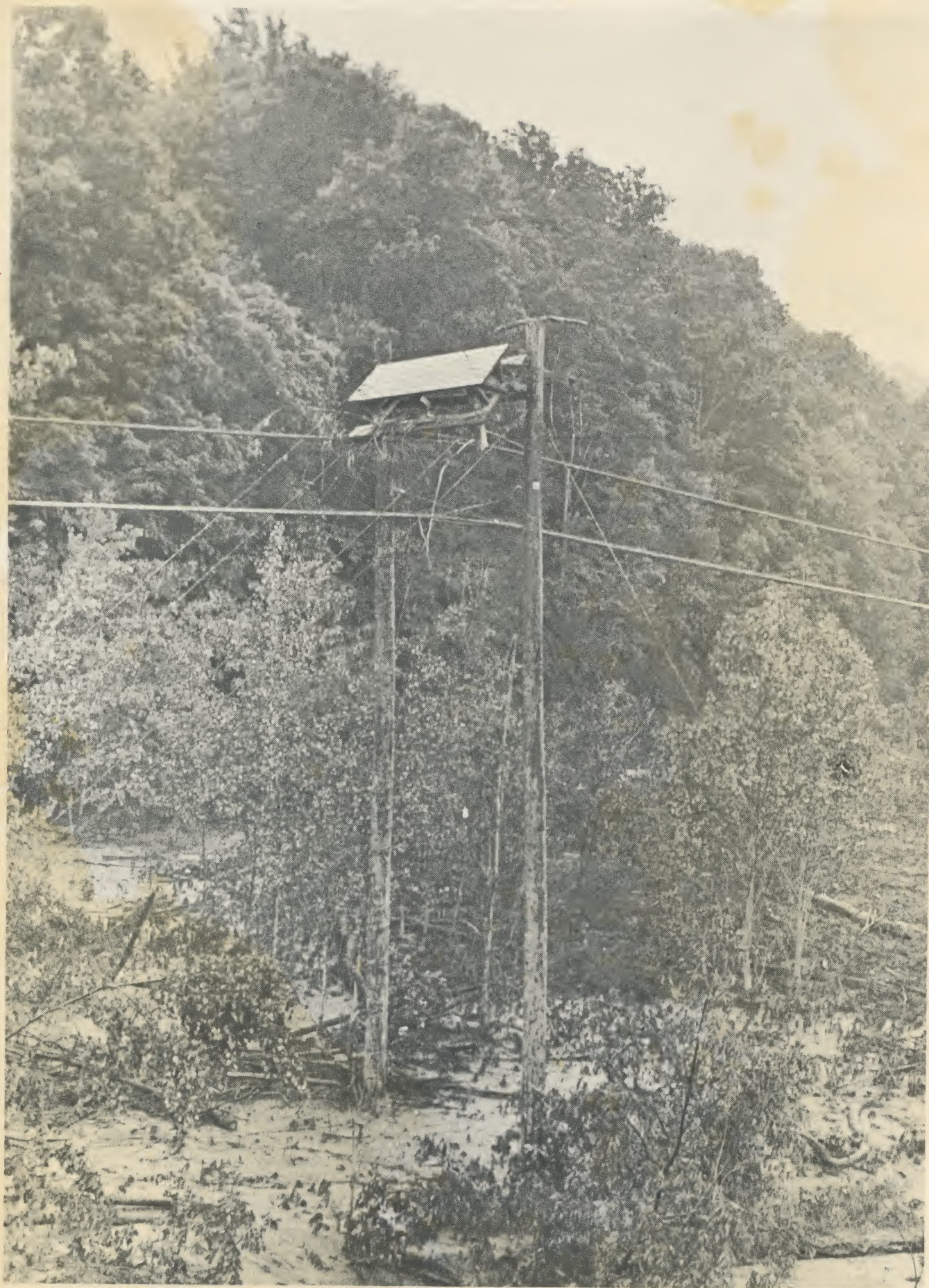


Volunteers rescue an elderly man in downtown Elmira when the water was six feet deep and rising.
(UPI)



Volunteers working in the downtown Elmira area.

(UPI)



The flood was not without its touches of humor such as this picnic table from Kanakadea County Park west of Hornell left high and dry on telephone poles when impounded waters receded above the Almond Dam.

Penelope
Natural History
1661